# Cultural conceptualisations of English words among Basotho who study English as an L2

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## Abstract
*Despite the vast literature on use of English in different contexts, there is paucity of information on the cultural conceptualisations encoded by English words in different contexts. This qualitative study aims to fill this gap by exploring the cultural conceptualisations of English words among Basotho who study English as a Second Language (L2). Employing the theory of cultural conceptualisations and language, the study examines the cultural conceptualisations encoded by English words among Basotho who study English as a Second Language. Nineteen participants were purposively selected to represent Basotho English L2 speakers. The participants were asked to define, use and show relationships between some English words. The definitions, uses and classifications of some words show that they encode Sesotho cultural conceptualisations while others instantiate English cultural conceptualisations. The findings reveal that the conceptualisations are heterogeneously distributed, confirming the findings of earlier studies which proposed that cultural conceptualisations are heterogeneously distributed among members of one cultural group.*

**Key terms**: *Basotho, cultural conceptualisations, Englishes, L1, L2*

## Introduction
In a globalised world, speaking an additional language to one's native language presents many opportunities. English is one of the languages that are spoken as second languages (L2s) by many people, because of the opportunities they present. Cognisant of this fact, linguistics has engaged in several research projects that aimed at providing insights about teaching and learning of English as a second language (L2) that could help both educators and learners alike (Kachru, 2005; Selinker, 1978; Sharifian, 2016). The studies have revealed that there are several processes involved in learning of English L2 and that many factors affect the progress of English L2 learners (Crystal, 2007).

However, very little has been done in the area of conceptualisations encoded by English words in L2 (Sharifian, 2016). Therefore, there is limited information about the conceptualisations of English words by English L2 speakers, and the effect of this on learning of the language. This paper aims to advance the literature in this area by examining the conceptualisations of English terms by Basotho English L2 speakers. This study explores the conceptualisations instantiated by English words among Basotho who study English as their L2, and discuss the implications of the findings for learning of English in Lesotho. In order to uncover the cultural conceptualisations of English words, the participants are given tasks that require them to define, use and determine relationships between some English words.

## Related Literature
Various studies exploring issues related to learning of English L2 have been carried out in the past. There are two approaches that have dominated the research on English as L2. One of these approaches is the Standard English Model (McArthur, 1987). The Standard English approach advocates for use of English which is modelled on English L1 speakers' use of the

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language. The performance of L2 speakers is evaluated against the native speaker model (Selinker, 1978, MacArthur, 1987 & Crystal, 2007). Using the Standard English model, researchers have been able to uncover many patterns in learning of English L2 and to come up with frameworks that can be applied to other languages. For instance, Selinker (1978) observes that English L2 consists of two types of errors. There are the developmental errors that include the overgeneralisation and undergeneralisation of the rules of grammar of English, and there are also transfer errors where features of L1 appear in the learners' English. Selinker (1978) reveals that the distribution and types of errors is not evenly distributed among English L2 speakers, but the performance of different learners is influenced by factors such as sociocultural context and the degree in which they interact with L1 speakers. Selinker (1978) coined the term 'interlanguage' for grammar used by English L2 learners, and hypothesised that an interlanguage existed in every context of L2 learning. The finding by Selinker (1978) is very important as it reveals that not only are there differences between L1 and L2 speakers but that there is variance in how L2 learners use English words. However, the line of research using the Standard English Model has limited itself to the morphosyntactic elements of language. There is still a gap that needs to be filled regarding the cultural conceptualisations of English words among English L2 speakers.

The majority of studies in Southern Africa have employed the Standard English model to explain the use of English in the region. In Lesotho in particular, the studies have tended to focus on the differences between Basotho L2 speakers and English L1 speakers, with the different performance by L2 speakers regarded constituting of errors (Kamwangamalu & Moyo, 2003; Khati & Khati, 2009). Kamwangamalu and Moyo (2003) reveal that Basotho generally differ with English L1 speakers in terms of pronunciation and syntax. This means that, like all studies relying on the Standard English Model, the studies carried out in Sourthern Africa limited themselves to the morphosyntactic elements of English and, therefore, provided no insights on the cultural conceptualisations underlying English words among the L2 speakers of the language.

The other dominant approach in study of English L2 is the World Englishes framework introduced by Kachru (1990). In this framework, each variety spoken by non-native speakers is regarded as independent (Kachru, 2005). Using this model, scholars have been able to document different varieties of Englishes, such as the Nigerian (Bamiro, 1991, Bamiro, 1995 & Owolabi, 2012) and South African Englishes (Botha et al., 2020; Van Roy, 2020). Although this line of research acknowledges and advocates for variation in use of English, it still does not cover the area of cultural conceptualisations. Similar to the Standard English Model, it focuses only at the morphosyntactic component of English and neglects the cultural conceptualisations.

Recently, researchers on the use of English across different cultures turned to theories of Cultural Linguistics. In particular, the scholars have found the theory of cultural conceptualisations and language to be important in exploring the use of English across different settings (Sharifian, 2005, Sharifian, 2011, Xu & Sharifian, Xu & Sharifian, 20182017, & Malcom, 2018). According to the theory of cultural conceptualisations and language (Sharifian, 2005), the conceptualisations underlying the use of a language are influenced by the culture in which that language is spoken in. The categories and schemas surrounding the words of that language are influenced by the cultural experience of the speakers. This applies to both L1 and L2. This means that there is usually a difference in the set of conceptualisations underlying a language between L1 and L2 speakers as the two sets of speakers usually have two differing cultural experiences (Sharifian, 2005).

Various studies used cultural conceptualisations to explore intercultural communication (Sharifian, 2010), to document different Englishes such as Aboriginal English (Malcolm, 2018) and Chinese English (Xu & Sharifian, 2017), and to examine English Language Teaching (ELT) (Xu, 2014) among other things. This line of research confirms that English words encode

different cultural conceptualisations based on the cultural background of the speakers. For instance, Xu (2014) reveals that cultural conceptualisations instantiated by different Asian Englishes are specific to the culture they are used in. Sharifian (2005) shows that these differences occur even in situations in which different groups of speakers are regarded as using one variety of language. Sharifian (2005) further reveals that those English speakers of Aboriginal descent who had the same accent as English speakers of Anglo-Australian descent and, therefore, were regarded as native speakers of English, used English words to instantiate Aboriginal cultural concepts. Sharifian (2016) uses the expression 'glocalisation' to explain the adaptation of English to a new culture and the creation of a new set of conceptualisations. According to Sharifian (2016), the process of 'glocalisation' involves three steps, namely: (1) the use of English words to instantiate conceptualisations they did not originally encode; (2) bringing of English conceptualisations into the target culture; and (3) the merging of the conceptualisations from English culture and those in the target culture.

The line of research that uses the theory of cultural conceptualisations and language to explore conceptualisations underlying a language is important as it explores an element of language that has been largely neglected. Specifically, there is limited information regarding the cultural conceptualisations underlying the use of English in different contexts. Carrying out this type of research in different settings can provide further information about the use of English in different contexts, and carrying out this type of research in Lesotho can lay a ground towards the documentation of the type of English used in Lesotho.

## The Context of the Study
The study was carried out in Lesotho, which uses English as an official language alongside Sesotho. After the first three years of schooling, in which the medium of instruction is Sesotho, students in Lesotho are exclusively taught in English (Khati & Khati, 2009). Khati and Khati (2009) further establish that similar to other former colonies of Britain without English-majority speaking population, Lesotho has attempted to use English modelled on the one used in the Britain. To ensure quality, the country has outsourced the services of UK examining bodies to set the English papers for Basotho students and prescribe materials that provide information on this type of English. Revealing the cultural conceptualisations of English words, which are often not included in pedagogical considerations, can reveal how challenging this may have been to learners and what approaches may be suitable in future in learning and teaching of English language in Lesotho.

## Methodology
The aim of the study is to explore the cultural conceptualisations of English words among Basotho who speak English as an L2. The study used a qualitative approach. The attributes of the data rather than quantities were the focus of the study. The study focused on how English words are used and the nature of the elements of culture that are encoded by these words. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its suitability in analysing non-numerical data such as the elements of culture that are encoded by English words.

### Population and Sample
The population of the study are Basotho who speak English as an L2. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 19 Basotho who speak English as a second language and are 4th year English Language and Linguistics majors at the National University of Lesotho. This sampling technique enables the selection of members of the population that can provide the relevant data to the study. The sample was selected on the basis that they are Basotho English L2 speakers who are at an advanced level in English and Linguistics Studies at a university that uses English as a medium of instruction.

### Data Collection Procedures

In order to collect the data, participants were given a series of tasks that required them to define, use and categorise different English words. The participants were given a questionnaire that outlined each of the tasks.

Task One required the participants to define and use the following English words: "dating", "working class" and "etiquette". The objective was to find out the schemas and categories that the participants associated with the words. These words were selected because the concepts they represent are usually conceptualised differently in different cultures and one could easily determine if the schemas the participants associate with the words reflect English or Sesotho culture. For instance, the cultural conceptualisations of the word "working class" may differ between Sesotho and the English culture because the social classifications differ in the two cultures. Asking the students to both define and use a word was intended to elicit sufficient information for drawing conclusions about the cultural conceptualisations encoded by a word.

Task Two required the participants to determine the relationship between different words. This task was divided into two parts. The first part of the exercise required them to group closely related words together from a given list and to put any word that contrasts with the members of the set outside that set. This exercise was mainly aimed at uncovering the categories that are associated with the concepts represented by the words. For this exercise, another set of words that represent social concepts, such as "civilized person", "modern", "advanced", developed", cultured" and "primitive", were selected.

The second part required them to contrast the following English words that refer to geographical elements: "hill" and "mountain" and "coast and "beach". The objective was still to find out the categorisations - and where possible schemas - of the concepts as represented by the English words. The geographical concepts were selected based on the assumption that the people's experiences about these concepts may differ from place to place.

Task Three required the participants to interpret the meanings of some English words, such as "middle class" and "town", basing themselves on how the words were used in a passage describing features of life in the United State of America. The objective was to find out the cultural conceptualisations of words describing experience in a different culture from the participants and to find out if the participants' cultural experience has a role in how they interpret the words found in a reading passage.

*Data Analysis*
First, there was compilation of the students' responses where similar answers were grouped together. For instance, all cases which defined "dating" as a relationship were given the code "R", and grouped together. After this, each group of answers was explored for the schemas and categories it instantiated. That is, the cultural experiences highlighted by the answers were highlighted. Lastly, the cultural experiences – cultural conceptualisations – encoded by the words among the participants were compared and contrasted with the cultural conceptualisations they encode in English L1 context. To obtain information on the cultural conceptualisations among L2 speakers, three English dictionaries that compile the definitions and uses of English words, including cultural elements associated with their uses, were consulted. The three dictionaries are the McMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learner's (Rundell, 2007), Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Wehmeir, 2009) and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (Cowie, 1989).

**Findings**
This section presents the findings of the study derived from the results on Tasks One, Two and Three.

***Task One – Definitions and uses of English words***
### Definitions and Uses of "Dating".
Task One required participants to define and use three words: "dating", "working class" and "etiquette". Eighteen of the 19 participants defined the word "dating". Interestingly the majority of the participants regard a marked meaning of "dating" as its basic meaning. Eleven of the participants defined "dating" as a romantic relationship, as can be seen in (1) and (2).

    (1) Being in a relationship with the opposite sex.
    (2) Being lovers

However, only one dictionary indicates that "dating" can refer to a relationship. Even then, the dictionary indicates that this usage is usually associated with American English. Overall, the dictionaries define "dating" as series of meetings between people who are interested in developing or have just started a relationship.

The conceptualisation of the marked meaning of the word "dating" as its basic meaning can be explained with reference to the experiences of the participants. First, the courtship processes in Sesotho do not normally include meetings that are usually referred to as dating in Sesotho. Second, probably due to this situation, the word "dating" has been adopted as a loan word by the youth to represent a romantic relationship in Sesotho. The participants' definition of the word reflects this use of the expression among Basotho youth.

Seven other participants provided the definition of the word "dating" as an occasion in which people go out for romantic reasons, as illustrated by (3).

    (3) An occasion where two lovers-to-be meet.

To some extent, the understanding of "dating" as an occasion in which people go out for romantic purposes matches the conceptualisation of the word in L1. However, contrary to the participants' restriction of "dating" to a single occasion, the dictionaries show that in L1 "dating" is understood to involve a series of meetings. The restriction of "dating" to a single occasion is possibly influenced by the fact that in Lesotho, the courtship process does not involve outings and in the case in which they are there, they are very few.

### Definitions and Uses of "Working Class".
Sixteen participants provided definitions of 'working class'. The results show that the majority of the participants regard "working class" as a class of people who have high paying jobs, because of good education. Sentences (4) and (5) are examples of how the majority of the students defined "working class".

    (4) A person who has a high paying job.
    (5) A person who works, especially one who has qualifications.

One participant described members of the working class as "civilized" people, which probably means that they lead privileged lives surrounded by latest technology and other modern amenities.

These understandings of "working class" differ with the conceptualization of "working class" by native speakers, which is a social class whose members do manual work and do not have power or money as indicated by the dictionaries. There was, however, one participant who shows these understandings.

The possible reason for these conceptualisations is that the lack of employment in Lesotho has created two classes: the employed and unemployed. The employed are regarded as "privileged" since they have money which the majority of the population do not have. Apart

from the factory workers, most employed people have academic "qualifications" in certain fields.

Only five participants used the expression "working class", which suggests that the expression does not feature frequently in participants' conversations. Just as they predominantly defined "working class" as a group of people who get qualifications that help them get jobs, they also used "working class' seemingly with reference to a group of people who are more successful than others, especially financially. In (6), the speaker voices their dislike for members of the working class for making them "feel like a loser", a situation which usually occurs when the other person is wealthier or has better qualities than the other. Sentence (7) is similar: the speaker still expresses hatred against the members of the working class whom, presumably because of their higher status, appear to look down upon others.

(6) I loathe hanging around with working class people, because they usually make me feel like a loser.
(7) I hate working class people, because they think they are all that.

**Definitions and uses of 'Etiquette'.**
Only three participants responded to this question. Two of the participants gave a definition that is closely similar to the definitions and uses of English words in the three English dictionaries. They described "etiquette" as "good manners". The other participant defined "etiquette" as "fairness", which is different from the definitions found in the dictionaries.

The lack of responses for this question suggests that the majority of the participants may not well familiar with this expression. This is possibly because Sesotho deals with issues of etiquette differently. This is further confirmed that only one participant of the three who defined the word has used it in their sentence. The participant seems to be familiar with the use of expression. The expression is used to evaluate contact of students at a local school who have a reputation of being unruly, labelled as X school in (8). In what matches the dictionaries definition of the expression as "the rules of polite and good behaviour", the participant indicates that the students lack "etiquette".

(8) X school students generally have no etiquette.

*Task Two – Word relationships*
**Placing Closely Related Words Together in a Set.**
On the first part of Task Two, the students were asked to put closely related words in a set, and to put words with opposite meanings outside the set in a list of words referring to social institutions. They provided the classifications as seen in sets 1-12 in Figure 1 below.
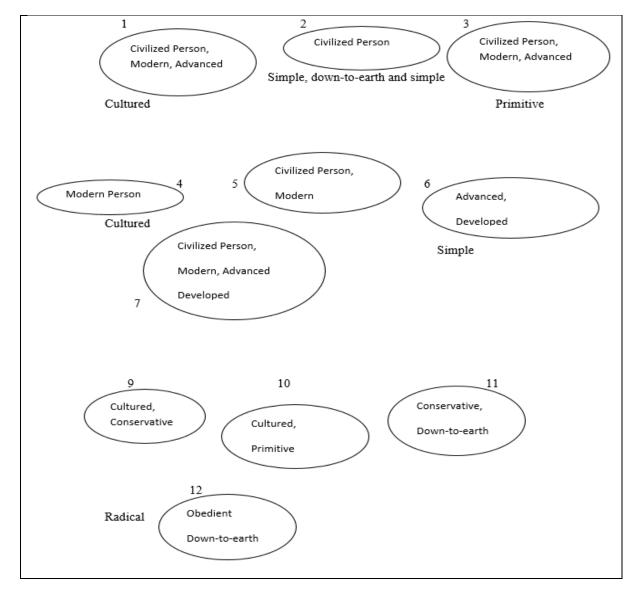
1
Civilized Person, Modern, Advanced

Cultured

2
Civilized Person

Simple, down-to-earth and simple

3
Civilized Person, Modern, Advanced

Primitive

4
Modern Person

Cultured

5
Civilized Person, Modern

6
Advanced, Developed

Simple

7
Civilized Person, Modern, Advanced Developed

9
Cultured, Conservative

10
Cultured, Primitive

11
Conservative, Down-to-earth

12
Obedient Down-to-earth

Radical

*Figure 1.* Classifications of closely related word in sets 1-12

In sets 1-12, the most common trend is that of having "civilised person" and "modern" together, "advanced" and "modern" together, and "conservative" and "down-to earth" together. The definitions of these words by the dictionaries confirm that the majority of the words that the participants grouped together are considered to refer to closely related concepts by English L1 speakers. An exception is the "conservative" and "down-to-earth" pair. While both refer to people's outlook, the two words refer to concepts that have little relationship, with "conservative" denoting an approach that opposes change, and "down-to-earth" denoting being practical and sensible. This is an attribute that can apply to both a person who is considered conservative and a person who is not considered conservative.

Another difference between L1 speakers and the participants is in the understanding of the word "cultured person". Although the dictionaries reveal that "cultured" refers to a well-educated person who is able to understand and enjoy music, literature and other arts, which means it has associations with words such as "civilised person" and "advanced", the word was never grouped together with these words. Instead, some participants put it outside a set containing these words as an indication that the participants considered it as having a contrasting meaning to these words. In another case, two participants put "cultured person" together with "primitive". The understandings that "cultured" is the opposite of "civilised

person", and that is is has similar meaning to words such as "primitive", reflects the perception of things to do with the traditional Basotho practices, such as their music, poetry and other arts, as not "civilised".

The next subsections present the results of the second part of Task Two, which required the participants to show the relationship between words referring to geographical concepts by differentiating between them.

### Differentiating between "hill" and "mountain".

All the seven participants who contrasted the two words indicated that a "hill" is different from "mountain" in the respect of size; that is, a "hill" is smaller. Sentence (9) below is an example of how the participants contrasted a "hill" with a "mountain".

(9) Hill is smaller than a mountain.

The description of both a "hill" and a "mountain" given in (9) matches the dictionaries' definition of the entities. However, one of the participants indicated that a "hill" is rocky and barren of grass as can be observed in (10).

(10) Hill is smaller and composed of rocks/soil.

This definition contrasts with that of the dictionaries which show that a "mountain" is a "mass of high rock". The possible reason behind this contrast is that, in Lesotho, entities that are regarded as hills are generally rocky while the taller structures that qualify as mountains are covered by grass. Seemly, in their description of a "hill", the participant drew from their experience in Lesotho, and this led to the situation of the participant including an aspect that is perceived to be an attribute of both a mountain and a hill to be a distinguishing factor between the two concepts.

### Differentiating between "lake", "dam" and "sea".

The eleven participants who contrasted the three words mentioned size as the major element that distinguishes the three entities. Sentence (11) is an example of how the participants contrasted "lake", "dam" and "sea".

(11) Lake is smaller than a dam, while a dam is smaller than a river or sea.

These conceptualisations match the ones reflected in the dictionaries' definitions of the words. However, as it can be observed in (11), seven of the eleven participants that contrasted the three concepts portray a "lake" as smaller than a "dam", an issue that the dictionaries do not make mention. This is probably because most of the dams found in Lesotho are bigger than the known lakes as they are built for purposes of providing South Africa with water. So, again, the participants relied on their experience in contrasting the English words.

Moreover, while the dictionaries refer to the wall holding the water back, not the water, as the dam, the six participants regard both the wall and the water as a "dam", probably reflecting a Southern African meaning of the word (Branford & Branford, 1991). The participants' definition of a "dam" as both the wall holding the water and the water is given in (12).

(12)    Sea a huge volume of water than a dam, and lake smaller than a dam.

### Differentiating between a 'coast' and 'beach'.

Only six participants responded to this question. Probably, unlike "sea", which appears in many Sesotho texts, including the Sesotho Bibles and has a name in Sesotho, "coast" and "beach" did not appear to be are not that common in the participants' utterances. The

participants indicate that the "coast" is bigger than a "beach", as can be observed in (13) which matches the conceptualisations of the two words in L1.

(13)    Coast is large while beach is small.

***Task three – Interpretation of words from a word passage***
The participants were asked to provide the meanings of the underlined words as used in the following passage extracted from the *Time Magazine* (Zakaria, 2010).

*When I got to America on <u>college</u> scholarship, I realized that the real American Dream is somehow different from [what I had seen on television]. I visited college friends in their home <u>towns</u> and was struck by the spacious <u>suburban</u> houses… America had two-car garage. And this <u>middle-class</u> contentment created a country of optimists.*

### Interpretation of "college".
Nine participants gave an interpretation of "college". Two participants defined "college" as a school, which is similar to the dictionaries' general definition. Participants C, M, Q and S' interpretation also appears to be general, while participant I and N gives a more detailed interpretation which matches details given by the dictionaries that a "college" is a tertiary institution that is not a university. However, the dictionaries present "college" to be sometimes a university which can offer a bachelor's degree, but not advanced degree in the United States of America. None of the participants mentioned this, either, because they considered it irrelevant or because in Lesotho such 'colleges' are commonly referred to as 'technikons'.

### Interpretation of "Town".
Seven participants provide an interpretation of "town". Four of the participants defined town as a place 'where others originated from'. This corresponds with the use of the word in the passage as referring to the residential places where the author's colleagues lived at. However, three other participants did not include this important component of the word but instead provided typical features of a town in Lesotho. As it can be observed in (14), two of the participants foreground the aspect of town that is not relevant in the passage. They view it as a place with shops, or as a "market places".  The inclusion of "government offices" as some of the elements of towns could be based on the context of Lesotho where the towns are administrative centres of their districts and they house government offices.

(14)  A place where there are big shops and government offices to deliver services.

One participant described a "town" as a "city". The dictionaries show that this does not only contrasts with the use of the word in the passage but it is also at odds with what happens in L1 generally. The dictionaries show that in L1, the expression "town" is used to refer to "a place where people live and work that is larger than a village but smaller than a city". The participant seems to have been guided by what happens in Lesotho, where both the capital city, and the other towns, are linguistically treated as similar items, referred to as either town or city, or *toropo* (a loanword from Afrikaans) in Sesotho.

### Interpretation of "suburban".
Seven participants gave their interpretation of the word "suburban". Except for one participant, all the participants that responded to this question described 'suburban' as places of "rich people" where people lead "modern", "beautiful" and "luxurious" lives. Sentence (15) is an example of how the participants defined "suburban".

(15) Rich people's houses/homes.

To a large extent, the definitions of suburban by the participants contrast with the use of the word in the passage. Although the word is used to describe a good middle class where people

could afford most of the amenities, it is not used to refer to a neighbourhood of wealthy people. The contextual meaning of the word in the passage does not refer to places in which people lead "luxurious" lives. Instead, it refers to a middle-class dwelling. Seemly, in interpreting this expression, the participants based themselves on the situation in Lesotho where there are two dichotomies: rural places and towns and the places around them. While the rural places are associated with poverty, the towns and places around them are seen as places of affluence. Therefore, in informal communication, the expression "suburbs" refers to places of opulence, a meaning that suburban is given by the participants.

### Interpretation of "middle class".

Eight participants responded to this part of the question. Seven participants provided definitions that match the meanings the word has in the passage and in the dictionaries by describing the class as neither rich nor poor and 'not upper or lower class'. Four participants provide definitions that reveal that they associate middle-class with privilege and luxury. While the passage highlights the wealth of middle class in America, it is also possible that the participants have drawn from their experience where the majority of the people in Lesotho live below poverty line and people constituting the middle class can be regarded as wealthy and privileged since. That is, in comparison to other people, they can "buy whatever they want" as claimed in (16).

(16) People who could buy whatever they want.

## Discussions

The results of this study reveal that there is a unique way of defining, interpreting, using and classifying English words among Basotho English L2 speakers. The findings reveal that this is due to the existence of a unique set of cultural conceptualisations that English words encode among Basotho English L2 speakers.

First, the definitions, uses and classifications of some words reveal that they encode Basotho cultural conceptualisations. In this regard, the findings of the study align with the findings of past research that have revealed that sometimes English words encode cultural conceptualisations they do not originally encode, such as the cultural conceptualisations reflecting Aboriginal cultural experience (Sharifian, 2005 & Sharifian, 2016). For instance, the results showed the two attributes of 'being rocky' and 'covered by grass' as the major distinguishing features between a "hill" and a "mountain" to the participants because most of the hills in Lesotho are rocky, and mountains are covered by grass. These are not cultural conceptualisations encoded by these words in L1 communication. In addition, the definition and use of the word "working class" show that it encodes Basotho cultural conceptualisations of members of the working class. In their use and definitions of the word, some participants associated "working class" with wealth and prestige. These understandings of the people who work and who usually are put together into one group, namely the working class, are widespread among Basotho, where, due to the high unemployment rate and poverty level, any person who has a job is regarded as well off, regardless of what type of job they are doing. Second, the findings of this study substantiate Sharifian's claim (Sharifian, 2016) that the use of English words in another cultural setting brings in English cultural conceptualisations into the target culture. The findings show that, in some instances, the definitions, uses and classifications of the words are based on English cultural conceptualisations. Third, the findings reveal that, as Sharifian (2016) proposes, there is the merging of the target culture conceptualisations and English cultural conceptualisations of the English words and that it is this merging of different cultural conceptualisations that results in a new set of cultural conceptualisations that is unique to Basotho English L2 speakers.

This study found that there are many factors that lead to the new set of cultural conceptualisations of English words among Basotho. One of these factors is the cultural schemas associated with the concept represented by the English word among Basotho. For

instance, the perceptions of some elements of Sesotho culture, such as Sesotho music and poetry as 'backward' by some Basotho, lead to the conceptualisations of the English word "cultured person" as closely-related to "primitive". Another factor is the presence of an equivalent word in the Sesotho. The findings show that the participants' understandings of the word "town" match that of the equivalent Sesotho word, *toropo* ('town'), a loanword incorporated in Sesotho in the 19th century.

Additionally, the adoption of a word "dating" into Sesotho as a loanword seems to have effect on the cultural conceptualisations it encodes. Partly, due to its use as a loanword with the basic function of referring to a relationship of young people in Sesotho, the word "dating" is regarded as having the basic meaning of referring to a relationship that involves young people. Lastly, the proximity of South Africa, a majority English-speaking country with its own variety of English, appears to have an effect on how English words are conceptualised by Basotho English L2 speakers.

The findings reveal that although they are generally shared by speakers of the same cultural group, the cultural conceptualisations of the English words sampled in this study, similar to all other elements of culture, are heterogeneously distributed. There are both similarities and differences between the speakers in how they conceptualise the words. This fact, and the fact that multiple factors, some of which are outlined in this section, contribute in the cultural conceptualisations, are a proof that cultural conceptualisations are emergent and come as a result of an interaction of multiple factors that are in a constant state of flux (Sharifian, 2011).

As observed in previous studies (Sharifian, 2010; Sharifian & Xu, 2017), the unique set of cultural conceptualisations of English words have implications for intercultural communication and for teaching of English Language. The unique ways of defining, using and interpreting English words can lead to communication breakdown between Basotho L2 speakers and other speakers of the language. Additionally, the variance between English L2 learner and native speakers in use of the English words and in how they could interpret them, however small, may be regarded as a sign that the L2 speakers have not yet acquired the required skills in using the language by examiners. The conceptualisation of 'dating' as mainly referring to a relationship demonstrates this point well. While a single appearance of dating as a synonym of 'relationship' may be overlooked, multiple uses of the word to refer to a relationship may be frowned upon and may cost the student marks on bad style. This applies to portraying "working class" as a class of privilege.

It is, therefore, important that cultural conceptualisations are explored and that they are considered in the learning and teaching of English in Lesotho, and in communication of Basotho with people from other cultural backgrounds. The current approach, which ignores cultural conceptualisations that underlie the definitions, uses and interpretations of English words as used in a reading passage and restricts itself to the morph-syntactic elements on morph-syntactic elements, is incomplete.

**Conclusion**
This study found that the cultural conceptualisations underlying English words among Basotho who speak English as an L2 are unique. The definitions, uses and classifications of some words show that they encode Sesotho cultural conceptualisations while the definitions, uses and classifications of others instantiate English cultural conceptualisations. This confirms that the cultural experience of English L2 speakers influences how they use and conceptualise English words. This has implications for the teaching of English L2, which currently does not factor in the issue of culture in teaching of English. Future studies can explore the cultural conceptualisations underlying English words among other groups of English L2 speakers. This can illuminate how the use of English language in different context is affected by culture. In addition, future research can focus on other culture-specific lexical items such as kinship terms, and examine the cultural conceptualisations that underlie these words.

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